Narrative and Freedom:

Representing the Lasting Effects of Slavery in Brinch and Douglass

Undergraduate Research Thesis

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by

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Before Kari J. Winter's publication in the early 2000s, the slave narrative of Boyrereau Brinch, *The Blind African Slave*, was forgotten by both scholarship and history. Published in 1810 in a small town in Vermont, the narrative tells the story of Brinch's capture in Africa, commodification in slave prisons in Barbados, and enslavement in New England, as well as his service in the Revolutionary War and ultimate emancipation as a result. Despite the text's value as a significantly lengthy account of the experience of a transatlantic slave, the Middle Passage, and Northern slavery, it had been largely forgotten, as Winter suggests, because no efforts were made to "authenticate" Brinch's story and existence.

Winter provides many reasons why *The Blind African Slave* was ignored at the time of its publication, as well as through the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Having been published just after transatlantic slave trade was abolished and just before the beginning of the War of 1812, the narrative "lacked significant political appeal" in its time (Winters 3). Moreover, the text depicts New England slavery, which gave it little value as propaganda in the Northern abolition movements against the South. To modern scholars, Winter believes the narrative was overlooked because of its possible inauthenticity, and that without her work to "authenticate" the text by verifying Brinch's existence and experience, the text would still be entirely ignored. While her work to find evidence of Brinch's life and experiences is valuable in understanding and appreciating *The Blind African Slave*, it also points to expectations within the genre and the demand for "authenticity" that slave narratives face.

The "authenticity" of Brinch's narrative is largely in question due to the involvement of Brinch's white amanuensis and editor, Benjamin Prentiss, and the fact that the text seems not entirely self-authored. Many slave narratives address the demand for "authenticity" and self-authorship by including letters or statements from reputable supporters who verify the accuracy

and legitimacy of the writers and narrators, including Equiano, Douglass, and Gronniosaw. Because Brinch's text does not include this, but instead includes significant influence from the white editor, as well as popular literature and other narrative voices, the question of its authenticity arises and without verification, the narrative is not trusted as telling a "true" story. It is, however, the question of authenticity itself that amplifies and solidifies the primary argument of the text, namely that because the autonomy of the African marked by slavery is forever undermined, so is his ability to self-narrate and establish his own "authenticity." While Winters focuses on how readers react to the text and their conception of its validity, I will instead focus on what the text itself is doing to establish an argument about the permanency of the effects of slavery on autonomy and freedom. Brinch and Prentiss's text fails to do what a slave narrative is expected to do, which is to prove the autonomy of the individual about who it is talking; however, that is precisely the point.

In my reading of *The Blind African Slave*, I will show how Brinch's text establishes him as lacking autonomy, and thus unable to self-narrate his own experiences of capture and commodification, as these moments represent the freedom that Brinch no longer has. By first looking at the second half of the text, I will examine how Brinch's narration of enslavement and emancipation shows his lasting lack of autonomy, despite being manumitted and therefore technically "free." I will then turn to the first half of the text to examine how Brinch and Prentiss's use of intertextuality, both in the form of co-authorship and citation of popular abolitionist literature, establishes the fact that his lasting lack of autonomy renders him unable to narrate even his own experiences of the last moments of freedom and the transition into enslavement. In examining form and narrative choice, I will show how the text makes an

argument about the permanent effects of capture and commodification, as well as the inability for subjugation to be reversed with emancipation for formerly enslaved people in America.

I will then compare this reading of Brinch's text to a reading of the narrative structure of Frederick Douglass's canonical 1845 text, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. Unlike Brinch's text, Douglass's text uses diegesis and extra-diegesis to show how it alternately establishes in him a freedom that does not exist in Brinch. Where Brinch's text fails to prove his autonomy through self-narration, Douglass's text succeeds by highlighting the authorial control of the narrator and writer, as seen in moments where he skillfully alternates between a past diegetic voice and a present extra-diegetic voice to express his experiences in slavery and freedom. In comparing the way that these texts represent self-authorship, I will examine the distinct arguments that they make about the lasting effects of slavery and the opportunity for autonomy that does or does not exist for formerly enslaved people in America.

Although we are trained to read the transatlantic narrative as following the paradigmatic plot structure of the narrator moving from freedom to enslavement and then back to freedom, Brinch's narrative disrupts this structure by instead depicting the narrator as moving from freedom in his homeland of Africa to a state of enslavement but never returning to freedom. Brinch is technically emancipated after his service in the American Revolutionary War; however, he never returns to freedom in a form comparable to what he experienced before capture and commodification. Recognizing Brinch's status as not truly free at the end of the text and in the moment that he and Prentiss create *The Blind African Slave* is imperative to understanding the rhetorical impact of both the content and form of the text. In recognition of this, I will begin with the narrative's second half and conclusion, despite the text's own

adherence to linear chronology so as to show Brinch's lack of freedom in both slavery and after emancipation.

Throughout the second half of the text, Brinch describes his movement from owner to owner, his service as a soldier in the American Revolution, his ultimate emancipation, and his life post-slavery. Through all of this, Brinch's primary focus is on the fact that he is never truly free after the moment of his capture and commodification, neither before emancipation nor after, due to the racist and abusive system in which he lives as a black person in America. He shows his obvious lack of freedom in slavery by highlighting his status as an object and by romanticizing death as an alternative to enslavement, and he shows a perpetual lack of freedom after emancipation by highlighting his struggle to maintain kinship ties with his own children and his inability to seek legal redress for the wrongdoings of his bigoted New England community.

Brinch's recurring romanticization of death as a preferable alternative to enslavement emphasizes the lack of freedom that he faced when a slave by showing that only in death could he return to the freedom he experienced pre-slavery. While at sea as a slave for Captain Mills, Brinch is shot five times during an enemy attack, about which he comments: "I felt no other sensation than that if they killed me, I should go to my father the sun; therefore, I courted death" (Brinch 149). Laying injured on the deck of the ship, Brinch recalls "contemplating a meeting with [his] grandfather" and is ultimately "disappointed" when saved by the ship's surgeon (Brinch 149). Brinch's "courting" death and disappointment when he survives comes from his belief that death will bring him reunion with his family and connection to the religion that he practiced prior to enslavement. The belief that he would meet with his grandfather after death suggests that there is a way, in death, to recreate the family ties that were severed by slavery, which would represent a return to freedom through the return to family. Moreover, his belief that

he would go to his “father the sun” when he dies creates a connection between family and religious ties, as it represents the sun as a religious deity through the lens of a paternal figure. As family and religious ties are systemically severed by the institution of slavery, often by intentionally breaking families apart and forcing Christianity onto enslaved people, it seems that Brinch views death as a way to reconcile these broken ties and return himself to a spiritual freedom through death, as it cannot be physically achieved in life.

Brinch again views death as liberating when he describes a dream in which “the good spirit came to [him]” and the two fly through “vast space” before landing in Brinch’s native town in Africa (Brinch 155). This dream, prompted by the life-threatening wounds that Brinch suffers at the hands of his first master in Connecticut, represents Brinch’s imagination of his own death and momentarily convinces him that he had actually died, as he states “I then thought that I had died of my wounds” and that his “great father, the sun, was the good spirit” that led him back home (Brinch 156). Here, Brinch is again referencing the paternal sun deity that he believes will come for him in death and return him to the religion, land, and family ties of his childhood and forefathers. In these moments of near fatality, Brinch finds himself longing to meet with ancestors, go back to his homeland, and ultimately be returned to the state of freedom that he enjoyed before enslavement and commodification, all of which is impossible in the physical world. This return to freedom and familial connection can only be achieved in death, which shows the utterly pervasive nature of his both physical and psychological enslavement.

Another way in which Brinch’s narration makes clear his lack of freedom is in his awareness of himself as a commodity to be bought and sold and the language that he uses to describe his movement from owner to owner. Despite being well-liked aboard Captain Mills’ ship and favorably nicknamed after a Supreme Commander of British naval forces, Brinch is

forced to "bid adieu to the British fleet forever, as [he is] sold to…John Burrell" in Connecticut (Brinch 152). In John Burrell's employ, Brinch is forced to sleep by the hearth with no warmth, starved of everything but "old crusts and bones" and beaten severely until a man named Samuel Eals steps in and removes him from the position on account of Burrell's "inhuman and unchristian" actions (Brinch 153-154). Though Eals treats Brinch relatively well, he forces Brinch back into labor once he recovers from his injuries: "As soon as I was able to work, I was sold to one Peter Pridon, son of the old Priest Pridon" (Brinch 156). In each case, Brinch describes his movement between owners in the passive voice, using phrases like "I was sold" as opposed to "X bought me," which shows an emphasis on himself as the item being sold rather than on the owner as the one acting as the buyer. Despite recognizing himself as a resource to be exchanged, Brinch uses this particular choice of language to deprive his buyers of subject status and maintain himself as the subject of his narration. Brinch understands that his owners are the "subjects" with authority and agency and that he is the object with no control over how he is exchanged; however, he doesn't want the grammar of his sentence to admit subject status to the owners, so he instead chooses a syntax that magnifies his lack of agency but not the owner's authority and subjectivity.

Brinch's use of passive voice in representing his transition from owner to owner continues until he is transferred to his final owner, Mary Stiles. Unlike each previous transaction, Brinch describes Mary Stiles as the active subject in buying him, stating " I remained [with Murrier] until September, at which time the Widow Mary Stiles, of Woodbury, Connecticut, bought me" (Brinch 157). Instead of stating "I was sold to Mary Stiles," Brinch opts to say, "Mary Stiles bought me," which shows deference to and recognition of her, which is unsurprising given Brinch's respect for her as "one of the finest women in the world" (Brinch

157). It is Mary Stiles who teaches Brinch to read, allowing him to "enjoy the light of the gospel" and who treats him kindly for about sixteen years before she dies (Brinch 158). Despite her kindness, however, Brinch's status is never improved beyond that of inhuman property. Upon Mary Stiles's death, Brinch "descended like real estate in fee simple to her son Benjamin Stiles," which most profoundly shows his reality as a commodity, as he is not only bought and sold, but even handed down generationally like money or real estate (Brinch 158). This experience of transfer is fundamental to the chattel slavery that Brinch endures, and his conscious choice to identify himself as "real estate" descending in "fee simple" shows his understanding of the conditions of his enslavement. Thus, though Brinch grants Mary Stiles subject status and lauds the way that she treats him, it is clear that he still recognizes her as his owner and himself as chattel.

When Mary Stiles's sons enter the Revolutionary War, Brinch enlists as well, stating "I also entered the banners of freedom" (Brinch 159). The overwhelming irony of an enslaved person fighting for the freedom of the very people who enslave him is not lost on Brinch, as he laments: "Poor African Slave, to liberate freemen, my tyrants" (Brinch 159). Because of his lasting status as unfree after the defining moments of capture and commodification, however, Brinch has no choice but to join the American struggle and its painfully ironic promotion of the "unalienable rights" that Brinch himself is consciously and unapologetically stripped of due to his race and country of origin. The idea that "all men are created equal" simply does not apply to Brinch, making abundantly clear the dehumanization of African slaves in a country where chattel slavery is normalized and justified both politically and socially.

When the war eventually ends, Brinch is "emancipated…from further slavery" and is granted leave to "seek [his] fortune" wherever he pleases (Brinch 166). Five years earlier, Brinch

contemplated returning to Barbados to seek revenge for his enslavement; however, when he is finally emancipated, he instead decides to travel to the new state of Vermont, "letting" himself to a variety of people and working for pay. At this point, Brinch explains that he begins to "enjoy the pleasures of a freeman" and that "one bright gleam of life seemed to shine upon [him]," as he marries a free African woman named Susannah Dublin (Brinch 167). However, it soon becomes clear that the life of a freeman is not as liberated as Brinch initially thinks, and he faces a variety of significant obstacles on account of "Vermont's pervasive racism" (Winters 58). Brinch's narrative, in which he describes life as a legally free man, puts emphasis not on his changed status but rather on the way that even legally free black people in the United States are not truly free. Through Brinch is emancipated and therefore no longer owned by anyone, he cannot own himself because of the precarious relationship he has to his children and their labor, as well as his lack of equity and equal access under law. Therefore, unlike the paradigmatic slave narrative that champions emancipation, Brinch's text suggests that though legally free black people in America are no longer property, they are certainly not free.

One of most significant obstacles that Brinch faces after emancipation is the threat of his children being taken from him as part of the "normal practice" of binding out children as laborers because of the belief that "Africans were incompetent as parents" (Winters 58). As Brinch explains, Northern "bigotry and puritanism," promotes the idea that "a Negro had no right to raise their own children," and that his children must therefore be bound out to work for others, specifically white community members (Brinch 170). In order to exploit Brinch's children, a white woman named Mrs. Powell submits a "complaint to the selectmen" against Brinch, with the only issue being that he is a black man (Brinch 170). As Mrs. Powell anticipates, this complaint enables the selectmen of Brinch's town to force him to bind his son out to a Mr.

Dixon, who wants to take advantage of the "profits of [the boy's] labor" (Brinch 170). Not only does this forced labor undercut the liberty that Brinch expects for himself and his family as free people, but, as Brinch explains, it also robs the family themselves of the boy's labor, which was needed to clear their land and create a home for their family and future generations. When the men come to take his son, Brinch admonishes them with "passages of scripture to prove the impropriety of a Christian people holding in chains of bondage their fellow beings," and argues that he needs his child to help develop their land and make a space for his "offspring's future dwellings;" however, this has no effect and Brinch's son enters a world of forced servitude only marginally different than his father's (Brinch 170-171). By referring specifically to "chains of bondage," Brinch invokes imagery of the chattel slavery that he endured, which forces the reader to draw a direct connection between the father's and son's experience with forced labor and subjugation.

In this same "scene of oppression," Brinch is similarly forced to bind out his daughter, Bersheba, to the same Mrs. Powell who initially complained about Brinch to the local government, showing how her access to authority as a white woman allows her to exploit Brinch and directly profit off of his children's labor (Brinch 171). The agreement of Bersheba's indenture, which Brinch approved only to avoid the authorities' forceful involvement, was that she would be taught to read, given a place to sleep, and returned at age eighteen a free woman. However, as Brinch states, "that good Christian woman never attempted to learn her to read, neither did she ever give her the bed," thus violating the terms of indenture and giving Brinch's daughter no compensation for her years of work (Brinch 171). Like her father before her, Brinch's daughter reaps no benefit from her own labor, neither in monetary payment nor amenities, effectively making her a next-generation slave. Thus, Binch's emancipation does not

allow him to be a father of free children, as his children are effectively taken from him on account of his blackness. Brinch's children are forced into positions only marginally better than the chattel slavery that he endures, which severely undercuts the legitimacy of his freedom post-emancipation.

Given his status as a black man, Brinch "could get no redress" for the forced indenture of his children because no lawyer would "undertake the cause of an old African Negro against a respectable widow…who had many respectable acquaintances" (Brinch 171). Here, again, it is clear that Mrs. Powell's status as a well-known white community member gives her access to authority, as it prompts the selectmen to support her in taking Brinch's children away and it deters legal professionals from contesting her actions. Brinch expresses the fact that his case would be a "dirty" cause which no lawyer would "disgrace himself" with, as the opponent is so reputable, given her race and social standing, and the only evidence that Brinch has for the legitimacy of the contract that was broken is his and his (black) family's word (Brinch 171). This legal isolation, as well as the perpetual racism that Brinch and his family face in their Northern community, solidifies the fact that Brinch is not free despite emancipation. It is clear that no longer being enslaved is not the same as being free, and that returning to the freedom that Brinch experienced before capture and commodification is impossible.

Prior to enslavement, Brinch's free state was defined by his autonomy, his maintenance of family and religious ties, and even his status as the grandchild of an important "councilor and governor" (Brinch 95). Once he is taken from his homeland, however, and entered into slavery, Brinch's status is forever changed to non-existent or mitigated freedom on account of enslavement and lasting subjugation even after emancipation. For formerly enslaved Africans in America, there was no option to return to their home and their lives, as seen in Brinch's

contemplation of his options before entering the Revolutionary War. He states, “I contemplated going to Barbadoes to avenge myself and my country,” but never considers returning to his country in any way other than death (Brinch 159). Thus, Brinch recognizes his early state of freedom in Africa as unattainable and unreconcilable.

To Brinch, Barbados represents the liminal space where both his physical and abstract freedoms are changed forever, as this is the place where he stops between Africa and America and transitions from human to chattel by being commodified as property. His disregard for even considering an attempt to return home, but instead contemplating going back to Barbados, shows that he could never physically return to Africa and the freedom that it represents. Brinch’s specific desire to go to Barbados for revenge, rather than Connecticut where he spent the overwhelming majority of his time in enslavement, reminds us of the unforgettable trauma of the place where he and many others were first abused, broken, and commodified. Thus, Barbados exists as both the physical and ideological embodiment of the African’s transition through capture and commodification, as well as the way that this transition shapes the individual’s status and experience for the rest of their lives, as well as their children’s lives in Brinch’s case.

Throughout this second half of the text, it is clear that Brinch is never truly free: from transferring between owners to fighting in a war that ironically promotes liberty to having his own children forced into servitude, he is never autonomous in the way that he was before the shaping moments where he was captured, commodified, and entered into slavery through the liminal space of Barbados. Brinch’s seemingly individual experience in the second half of the text is actually part of the more uniform experience, as nothing he does comes from a place of true autonomy but is instead directed by the institution of slavery. This uniform subjugation is

fundamental to chattel slavery, and it strips sufferers of the self-authority necessary to narrate experiences of freedom.

Brinch's lack of real freedom makes him necessarily unfree in the moment that he and Prentiss create and publish the text in the early 19th century. Therefore, because Brinch is not free in the moment of producing his narration, he is restricted in his ability to tell his story, particularly in telling the part of his story where he was still a free individual. Before being taken from Africa, Brinch was an autonomous person; however, he cannot give expression to these moments of autonomy because his self-authorship is mitigated by his now unfree status. Thus, though Brinch can sufficiently give expression to his narrative after enslavement and entrance into uniform subjugation, he is not able to sufficiently narrate the earlier part of his story without the aid of other narrative voices.

The few readers of Brinch's text have noted how often he turns to intertextuality in the first half of the narrative by including passages from other texts and the voices of other narrators, including his white amanuensis and editor, Benjamin Prentiss. Kari Winters suggests that this reflects the complicated relationship between the formerly enslaved narrator and his collaborator, as "*The Blind African Slave* is…shaped by the interests, politics, research and desires of the abolitionist editor" (Winters 3). Such complicated relationships are signaled in other slave narratives with white editors and/or amanuenses, such as Ukawsaw Gronniosaw's *A Narrative of the Most remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, an African Prince, As related by himself*, which was edited and prefaced by Reverend Walter Shirley and paid for by Calvinist socialite Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon. Similarly, even self-authored texts like those of Equiano and Douglass begin with testimonial letters that "authenticate" the author, thereby likewise illustrating the black author's difficulty in proving

their own authority. Thus, we can read the turn to other texts and voices in *The Blind African Slave* as similarly showing Brinch's struggle for authority in telling his own narrative.

Despite the validity of Winters's reading, I argue that Brinch turns to intertextuality and establishes a collaborative authorship between himself and Prentiss not just because of their unequal access to authority, but because such an approach best expresses the central argument of the narrative: as an African person marked by slavery, Brinch can never be truly autonomous. As I have shown, even after he is legally emancipated, Brinch's narrative stresses that he is not free and, thus, that he cannot write about freedom. While Brinch is able to successfully self-narrate the enslaved moments in his life, he cannot self-narrate the beginning of his life when he was still autonomous. To call attention to the fact that his life has been forever shaped by his captivity and that he thus cannot write about freedom, he turns to other voices in the first half of his text to describe his life before enslavement. And so, while we expect the autobiographical slave narrative to begin with the voice of the formerly enslaved person, the first voice we hear in *The Blind African Slave* is that of Brinch's amanuensis, Prentiss, who narrates the first few chapters of the text.

Prentiss provides a bird's eye view of Brinch's homeland in West Africa as an atemporal landscape, and then introduces the reader to a specific moment in time when he follows the slave ship that captures Brinch as it breaches the interior of Africa via the Niger River. In describing the kingdom of Bow-woo, Prentiss assures that "the account is taken from the narrator's own mouth" (93), but readers do not have access to Brinch's voice until the third chapter when Prentiss switches to Brinch's narrative voice with a simple parenthetical statement: "(for here the writer takes the language of the narrator)" (Brinch 109). While this phrase may seem incidental because it is relegated to parentheses, it importantly calls attention to the fact that even as Brinch

is not the first-person narrator of these opening chapters about his homeland, this account of Africa is his as it comes from his "own mouth." Significantly, though, the narrative marks a distinction between Brinch's "mouth" and his voice, which is represented by his "language." This distinction highlights the fact that Brinch still has the same physical body he had when he was a free person in Africa, but that his voice has been forever changed by the experiences of slavery. While other writers like Equiano or Venture Smith tell a story of freedom in Africa to emphasize how free they were before enslavement, Brinch contrastingly shows that he cannot narrate his life as an autonomous person in Africa because the experience of capture and commodification took even that from him.

Prentiss describes Africa and Brinch's homeland through an extensive survey of the land, productions, cultures, and customs. The first lines of the text address the reader's likely unfamiliarity with Brinch's native home, as Prentiss admits "few indeed have been the travelers who have penetrated into the interior of Africa, as far as the kingdom of Bow-woo" (Brinch 91). He immediately provides details about the latitude and longitude of the location, as well as extensive quotes from non-fiction travel narratives like "William Guthrie's *A New Geographical, Historical, and Commercial Grammar* (1770) and Jedidiah Morse's *Universal Geography* (1796)" to provide the geographic specificities of the area (Hewitt 295). This initial orienting of the reader to Africa generally sets up the atemporal view of the land like those that have been previously seen in travel guides and narratives. Increasing the specificity of his overview, Prentiss provides an exhaustive overview of the economy, culture, customs, and products of Brinch's home, the city of Deauyah in the kingdom of Bow-woo. Using Brinch's account, Prentiss describes the streets, houses, and public buildings of the town, detailing both where they are located and how they are built and colored. He goes on the explain the "Laws & Customs

particular to this Country," Brinch's family and ancestry, as well as the land's soil conditions and crop and livestock production (Brinch 94).

Prentiss's movement from general to particular depictions of the land and culture reaches its peak as he zooms in from his bird's eye view to follow the "river Neboah or Niger" (Brinch 91) that flows into West Africa and Brinch's native land. It is through this river that Prentiss introduces English slavery to Brinch's native land and tracks the entrance of Brinch and his countrymen into commodification. Prentiss's narration follows an "English vessel engaged in slave trade" up the Niger River to the town of Yellow Bongo, where the crew lay anchor and "sent out their boats to steal the innocent natives" of the land they'd entered (Brinch 92-93). It later becomes clear that this ship we see "penetrat[ing] into the interior of Africa" via the river is the very ship that captures Brinch and transports him to the West Indies and into slavery in 1758 (Brinch 91). By moving from the general to the particular, Prentiss takes his reader from an atemporal view of the landscape and people of Africa to a specific place and moment in time in which our primary narrator begins his story as a slave by being captured and commodified by the invading English ship.

Even after Brinch becomes the narrator of his own story with the switch to his first-person voice in the third chapter, the text's construction still emphasizes the insufficiency of his voice by frequently turning to voices of popular abolitionist literature. This recourse to other texts can be taken as evidence of Brinch's lack of narrative authority, as Brinch must turn to these other writers to bolster his own life story. My argument, however, is also that this frequent turn to intertextuality only happens in the beginning of Brinch's narrative where he was a free subject in Africa and in the immediate aftermath of his captivity because his lasting status as unfree denies him from narrating these moments. As such, intertextuality in Brinch's narrative

serves as evidence of a significant claim the text makes about the lives of enslaved people, namely that there can be no emancipation narratives because agency and authority cannot be so effortlessly restored once a person has been captured and commodified.

Because Brinch's entrance into slavery has forever denied him the ability to be an autonomous subject, he is obliged to turn to published authors to give expression to the sovereignty that he loses as soon as he is captured on the Niger River. By citing published literature and narrative voices with more authorial power than his own, Brinch emphasizes how his experience in slavery has forever stolen from him the capacity to be autonomous, which serves his larger argument about the lasting effect of slavery on enslaved people's freedom. In what follows, I will point to intertextual moments in Brinch's text where other narrators' voices tell the stories of their own entrance into slavery. These narratives focus significantly on the narrator's capture and entrance into slavery, thus reflecting Brinch's inability to narrate the last moments of freedom that individuals experience before entering a world of universalized subjection and dehumanization.

The first intertextual citation of popular literature appears when Brinch uses an abolitionist poem to give expression to his experience on the Middle Passage. He recalls his fellow Africans "screaming, crying, and wringing their hands with prayers" while sailing from Africa, and he particularly remembers a young boy who fears for his mother and siblings' survival back home (Brinch 120). This recollection, Brinch explains, brings to mind a poem "from a periodical publication of 1804," which he found "pathetic and apropos" because of its depiction of a mother's suffering as her children are captured, enslaved and forced to endure the Middle Passage (Brinch 121). Here, Brinch includes his first intertextual use of published

literature, turning to a free voice to give expression to the experience of an autonomous person grieving the loss of their children to slavery and the horror of the Middle Passage.

The poem first appeared anonymously in the *Boston Weekly Magazine* and illustrates the "distress which the inhabitants of Africa experience at the loss of their children, which are stolen from them by persons employed in the barbarous traffic of human flesh," as described in the original publication (Brinch 122). The speaker of the poem is an African mother shown in the moment that "cruel white men steal [her] children," and her lament as "sailors drag [her children]" to the ship that will "carry them away" directly applies to the current moment in Brinch's narrative where he is chained to the bottom of a ship, destined for slavery and forever separated from his native home and family (Brinch 121). In this instance, the children looking upon their "poor distracted mother" "scream[ing]" on the shore represent Brinch and the young boy on the ship who fear for their family back home, and the mother represents the family who mourns their capture into slavery. The image of the African mother standing "upon the shore…raving" and "fall[ing] upon the sands" calls to mind the bank of the Niger from which Brinch himself was stolen, and the mother's ultimate suicide by jumping headfirst "from a high rock in[to] the sea" highlights the finality of the capture of her children, much like the finality of Brinch's capture, which inhibits him from ever returning home to Africa (Brinch 121-122).

The use of this published piece of literature appeals to both the authorial power of the poet and the authorial power of the narrative voice of the still autonomous mother left behind. While her children are forever marked by capture and commodification, the mother in this poem remains in Africa, so she maintains her status as a free person, giving her the autonomy to express her experience. Brinch turns to a speaker who suffers from slavery not by being captured herself but by having her children stolen to give expression to the moment of capture, as he

himself can no longer self-narrate the last moments of freedom. In doing so, he emphasizes his lasting status as unfree, especially in comparison to the freedom that he would have maintained had he been left in Africa like the mother in the poem.

After describing the ship's arrival in Barbados in 1759 or 1760, Brinch turns to the widely famous "Inkle and Yarico" story to tell another narrative about capture, commodification, and the abuse of slaveholders. The "Inkle and Yarico" story originated in Jean Mocquet's *Voyages* in 1616 and became widely known after undergoing "various poetic and dramatic retellings in the course of the [eighteenth] century," including Richard Steele's 1711 version in *The Spectator* and George Colman's popular dramatization of the story in 1787 (Gallagher 190-191). As "versions of the story appeared with increasing frequency beginning in the mid-1730s," it is certain that Brinch and Prentiss would have been familiar with the extremely popular story, as well as many of the reiterations that were published throughout the century (Gallagher 190). In Steele's version of the story, an Englishman named Inkle accidentally lands his ship among a group of Native Americans, is saved and protected by a Native American woman named Yarico, and ultimately sells Yarico "to a Barbadian merchant" despite their having fallen in love and her being "with child by him" (Steele 195).

In later versions of the story, "Yarico was represented as a black slave" instead of as a Native American woman, which is how Brinch presents his retelling (Brinch 136). In his version, Yarico is an African princess who is taken from her home in Guingana and sold into slavery by her English husband. The Princess's story, which is presented in her own voice via embedded passages in both lyrical and prose form, details her feelings of betrayal as her husband sells her into slavery upon reaching Barbados as well as her physical abuse and eventual death. In her prose explanation, the princess similarly details her love for the Englishman and how it was met

with treachery, subjugation, and hatred. The Princess addresses her English husband, stating "When you were weary, I strove to procure you rest, when thirsty, I gave you the best of our wines to drink…When you were a-hungered I gave you the best of our fruits. When sick, I gave you Medicine and consolation" (Brinch 135). As the Yarico figure, the Princess of Guingana's story reflects the danger of trusting white Christians, who she sees as "wretch[es] and traitor[s]," and solidifies the "abolitionist potential of the Inkle and Yarico story" (Gallagher 190).

Brinch's decision to turn to this well-known tale without explicitly citing the popular "Inkle and Yarico" story should not be read as simple inauthenticity, but rather as a confirmation of the larger point of the narrative, which is that the system of slavery has made it such that even an ostensibly free man like Brinch has lost the ability to tell the story of his entrance into slavery and his last moments of freedom. Authenticity cannot be the primary focus in reading a slave narrative, as a demand for authenticity can never be truly satisfied by a narrator who is entirely shaped by the system of subjugation in which they exist. In incorporating this extremely popular abolitionist literature, Brinch seeks recourse in the authorial power of published work to be able to give expression to the experience of capture and commodification. By retelling the "Inkle and Yarico" story through the Princess of Guingana, Brinch calls upon the public's collective recognition of literature to emphasize his argument about the lack of autonomy that enslaved and formerly enslaved people experience.

Soon after, Brinch turns to another extremely popular piece of abolitionist literature with William Cowper's "The Negro's Complaint." After living in horrible conditions in Barbados, Brinch is "at length…sold to Capt. Isaac Mills," which brings to his mind Cowper's popular poem, which was first printed in 1788 in London newspapers (Brinch 137). As the "most widely quoted of Cowper's poems," "The Negro's Complaint" was not only published in pamphlet form

in “many thousand copies,” but also set to music and sung as a ballad (Turner). Cowper, an exceedingly popular white British poet and abolitionist, wrote this poem through the voice of a captive African, as seen in the first lines, “Forc’d from home and all its pleasures, Afric’s coast I left forlorn,” (Brinch 137). Through this voice, Cowper represents the experience of Africans being sold into slavery and faced with their own commodification. Brinch’s turn to a white abolitionist’s popular text reflects his strategy of turning to literature to buttress his authority, but it also more importantly reinforces the fact that his own narrative of enslavement can never be sufficient because he lacks agency with which to speak.

The poem argues against the commodification of humans and the transformation of people into property by suggesting a freedom of thought among enslaved people, stating “but though their’s they have enroll’d me, minds are never to be sold. Still in thought [I am] free as ever” (Brinch 138). Cowper’s poem imagines a black slave insisting that he is still free in thought even though he has been captured and commodified; however, the very fact that it is a white poet writing these lines seems to challenge that notion. The idea of freedom of thought is complicated by the fact that the act of self-narration in the poem has been so undermined by enslavement that the slave relies on a white author to give expression to black experiences through the imagined narration of a black slave. Brinch’s choice to turn to this canonized poem points to his lack of individual narrative authority, but also the lack of narrative authority of enslaved and previously enslaved people, such as the narrator created by this white author. This intertextual citation further highlights Brinch’s attempt to bolster his narrative with the multiple voices necessary to sufficiently represent the transition from freedom to slavery, while also illuminating his underlying argument about formerly enslaved access to autonomy and ability to self-narrate.

In another instance, Brinch turns to the poem "The Negro Boy," to search for insight into the slave holder's choices, particularly the decision to engage in slave trade and abuse. After describing a brutal whipping that leaves Brinch in and out of consciousness, bruised, and bloodied, he states "Thus I was sold, and thus was I whipped, without being able to expostulate or enquire of my tyrant the reason for treating me in the foregoing manner," which "forces upon [him]" recollection of the poem "The Negro Boy" (Brinch 141). Because the poem is in the slave trader's voice, as seen in the lines "I sold a blooming Negro Boy" and it offers an explanation of the trader's decision to sell the boy and force him into the cruelty of slavery, it serves as the type of insight that Brinch seeks in trying to understand his own abuse.

Brinch's connection between this poem and his experience being beaten is drawn in the moment that he is narrating rather than in the moment that he was being abused, as seen in his use of the present tense "forces" instead of "forced" when explaining that the memory makes him think of this poem. Brinch is, therefore, recalling the poem in recalling the abuse, which suggests that he is calling upon the poem to help make sense of and give expression to his experience. As in the case of the other poems that Brinch incorporates, he is here turning to the authority and narrative power of a published piece of literature to supplement the lack of authorial power that he has as a result of his lack of autonomy. In this instance, Brinch turns to the poem's presumptive narrator, an "African Prince who lately arrived in England," to give expression to a phenomenon unknown to him, namely the facilitation of enslavement and abuse (Brinch 141). Because of the way that Brinch is forever shaped by capture and commodification, he is unable to narrate moments of freedom nor moments of enslaving others, as these are experiences inaccessible to him. Therefore, he uses popular literature to access authorial power where he has none and to make clear the lasting effects of slavery on his autonomy.

In chapter six, Brinch does something new with his use of intertextuality by introducing the personal narrative of another enslaved woman that he meets while being held in Barbados. Unlike the earlier intertextual moments where Brinch cites published literature, the personal narrative of the woman, who Brinch simply calls "the black woman," does not draw on any other literary sources. The distinction between these types of citations, namely the citation of popular literature and the citation of personal narratives, is indicated in the way that Brinch introduces them. While the abolitionist literature is often introduced with either editorial comments like "the author has inserted the following lines, taken from a periodical publication" or with their titles like "The Negro's Compliant by W. Cooper, Esq.," the black woman's narrative is introduced with "I was anxious to learn her story, and at my request, she retold it to me as follows" (Brinch 144). The published literature's introduction highlights its authorial power and legitimacy, while the personal narrative's introduction simply emphasizes that it is "her story." Therefore, because the enslaved woman's narrative does not offer Brinch the authorial power that published literature can, he uses her story instead to supplement his own, giving expression to both their experiences at the same time.

The black woman's narrative serves as a reflection of Brinch's own narrative, as Brinch and the black woman discover that they are from the same country of Bow-woo and that she knows his family and friends personally. The Bow-woo woman describes being captured by slavers at the bank of the Niger, which likewise creates a parallel to Brinch's own experience of capture. Much like the story that Prentiss narrates in the first few chapters, the Bow-woo woman explains how "a party of us one day went down to see the Niger" and "discovered a boat containing white people" on the river (Brinch 145). Though she "anticipated their object, as many people had been taken before" and immediately ran, she was eventually caught, enslaved,

sent to Barbados and forced to marry the captain of the ship that transported her (Brinch 145). Brinch's inclusion of this narrative of entrance into slavery, which is almost identical to his own given their similar capture from the banks of the Niger and transfer to Barbados, shows his reliance on another narrative voice to give expression to the moment of commodification. As someone who is not free, Brinch cannot tell his story without the supplement of another. His own narrative of capture and commodification is expressed through co-authorship first by Prentiss's narration in the first few chapters and then by the Bow-woo woman's extremely similar narration of being stolen via the Niger River. However, the mutual lack of authorial power between Brinch and the Bow-woo woman creates a different type of co-authorship than Brinch and Prentiss's. This co-authorship necessitates that not only is Brinch collaborating with the Bow-woo woman to tell his story, but that she is also collaborating with him to tell her own story because, as a result of being marked by capture on the banks of the Niger River and commodification in Barbados, they have a mutual need for one another's help in self-narration.

Intertextuality in the first six chapters of the text allows Brinch to give expression to the slave's experience being taken from their native home and forced into the cruel world of slave trade, abuse, and commodification. Brinch establishes a practice of co-authorship by incorporating the narrative voices of both his white amanuensis, Prentiss, and other enslaved people, like the Bow-woo woman that he meets in Barbados. Moreover, he cites popular abolitionist literature from published magazines for two primary reasons: to appeal to the authors that he assumes his white readers will value and to, more importantly, reveal the way that self-authorship is impossible for any black person in America who has been enslaved. In incorporating the narratives of popular literature, Brinch makes recourse to the authorial power of the poet or writer to give expression to the experience of capture and commodification that he

cannot narrate himself, which emphasizes the lack of personal autonomy that he experiences as a person forever marked by slavery.

Each of the intertextual narrative voices focuses heavily on the individual's removal from their home in Africa, the moment they face injustice, and their abuse upon reaching the west and entering servitude. Brinch's reliance on intertextual voices to depict this essential moment in the larger transatlantic slave narrative highlights his limited authority in representing both the last moments of freedom and the first transitory moments of enslavement; his limited authority is ultimately a result of his lasting unfreedom from the moment of capture and commodification to the moment of creating this text with Prentiss. Thus, intertextuality in Brinch's text, both in the form of popular abolitionist literature and collaborative authorship with other narrative voices, serves Brinch's argument about the impossibility of self-narration for enslaved and formerly enslaved people in America given their lasting status as unfree.

Over thirty years after the publication of Brinch's *The Blind African Slave*, Frederick Douglass published his first slave narrative, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. While Douglass's text in some ways resembles Brinch's on account of their shared genre and aim to narrate the experience of slavery in America, there are many significant differences between them. One obvious difference is in narrative form, as Douglass does not use multiple intertextual voices in his narrative to give expression to his experience like Brinch, but instead creates multiple iterations of his own voice in both diegetic and extra-diegetic variations. Unlike Brinch's text, which argues that enslaved and formerly enslaved people are forever marked by capture and commodification and therefore lack the ability to self-narrate, Douglass's narrative makes a different claim about their access to autonomy and authorial power. Paradoxically, the fact that Douglass is born into commodification means that he frames his

narrative of escape as one that authorizes him, thus directly opposing Brinch's argument that enslavement denies people of autonomy even in physical freedom. Douglass offers a narrative that details a slave's transition out of universal suffering and into a world of autonomy through the acquisition of literacy, emancipation, and authorial power, portraying a freedom that Brinch's narrative denies.

Douglass's text has multiple narrative voices from different moments in the narrator's life. The diegetic voice that Douglass uses recounts the story of his life in slavery, his achievement of literacy and his escape to the north. This voice remains in the past tense, describing the previous experiences of the freed Frederick Douglass. The narrative voice shifts, however, when the narrator turns to extra-diegesis by taking the perspective of the present tense Douglass as he writes the text that the reader is consuming. In comparison to Brinch's narrative, Douglass's text is more focused on the individual's movement out of enslavement and into freedom, showing the formerly enslaved person's status as truly free through the authorial power to self-narrate. Though Douglass is not technically emancipated like Brinch but instead escapes, his narrative reveals a freedom that Brinch never achieves through narrative control and the use of both diegesis and extra-diegesis.

Throughout his text, Douglass shifts from the diegetic voice to the extra-diegetic voice to provide present insight about his past experiences and make explicitly abolitionist arguments. In the first chapter, Douglass uses the extra-diegetic voice to comment on the common practice of white slave owners sexually assaulting and impregnating their female slaves, resulting in the creation of a mixed-race population of individuals like Douglass himself. Then, he takes on the present tense voice and discusses the "law" that states that "children of slave women shall in all cases follow the condition of their mothers" (Douglass 3-4). Clearly prompted by the "whisper

that [his] master was [his] father," Douglass discusses cases where white men "sustain to [their] slaves the double relation of master and father" and the way that such relationships cause mixed-race slave children to "suffer greater hardships" than others (Douglass 3-4). He goes on to explain that the sexual assault of female slaves "is done too obviously to…make a gratification of their [slave owners'] desires profitable as well as pleasurable," which provides a present reading of the phenomena that he saw around him as a young boy and offers an explanation that he may not have understood at the time (Douglass 4). Thus, Douglass introduces a lived experience in the past tense, diegetic voice and then supplements it with the present tense, extra-diegetic voice to give a more explicitly abolitionist argument about the actions of white slaveholders.

Douglass comments on other aspects of slavery that he experienced through his extra-diegetic voice, including the legality of killing enslaved people and the ways that slave owners manipulate and subjugate their slaves. In each of these examples, Douglass uses his present knowledge to offer insightful anti-slavery arguments about the treatment that he endured as a younger man and the phenomena that he experienced as a slave. In chapter four, Douglass uses the diegetic voice to describe how an overseer named Mr. Gore kills a slave and faces no repercussions, recalling "Mr. Gore then, without consultation or deliberation with any one…raised his musket to [the slave's] face, taking deadly aim at his standing victim" (Douglass 23). Douglass makes it clear that this "horrid crime was not even submitted to judicial investigation" and that the slaves had no redress because they "could neither issue a suit nor testify against" Mr. Gore (Douglass 23). He then supplements the narration of this experience with the extra-diegetic explanation: "I speak advisedly when I say this – that killing a slave, or any colored person, in Talbot County, Maryland, is not treated as a crime, either by the courts or

the community" (Douglass 24). Here, the extra-diegetic Douglass supplements the past tense, diegetic Douglass's story of white slave owners and overseers avoiding legal repercussions for murder, showcasing Douglass's authorial power to both narrate diegetic moments and offer extra-diegetic insight.

Using the same narrative strategy, Douglass discusses the way that that owners manipulated their slaves by offering holidays and time off, first in the diegetic, past tense voice and then in the extra-diegetic, present tense voice. As he explains in chapter ten, "the days between Christmas and New Year's day are allowed as holidays; and, accordingly, we were not required to perform any labor" and "this time we regarded as our own….and we therefore used or abused it nearly as we pleased" (Douglass 74). He goes on to give examples of how many slaves spent their free time and the norms of the holidays, explaining "a slave who would work during the holidays was….regarded as one who rejected the favor of his master" and that "it was deemed a disgrace not to get drunk on Christmas" (Douglass 74). Douglass then switches to the extra-diegetic voice to make an argument about the way that owners use this time to manipulate their slaves: "From what I know of the effect of these holidays upon the slave, I believe them to be among the most effective means in the hands of the slaveholder in keeping down the spirit of insurrection" (Douglass 74). Douglass goes as far as to say that "the holidays are part and parcel of the gross fraud, wrong, and inhumanity of slavery," explaining that owners only allowed their slaves time off because they were afraid that if they took the holiday away from them, that the slaves would rise in insurrection. Moreover, Douglass argues that the "object [of the holiday] seems to be to disgust their slaves with freedom" by encouraging excessive drinking and forcing the slaves to correlate freedom with "a dose of vicious dissipation" (Douglass 75). While the diegetic narrative voice simply relays the experiences and norms of Douglass's life as a slave,

the extra-diegetic narrative voice offers explicit arguments and analysis about the manipulative actions of slave owners as the present Douglass reflects on his past.

In another instance of extra-diegesis, Douglass makes a direct comparison between his understanding of his experiences as a slave while he was living through them and his understanding of them in the present. When discussing the songs that slaves sang as they traveled to the "Great House Farm," Douglass breaks from the diegetic narrative and states, "I did not, when a slave, understand the deep meaning of those rude and apparently incoherent songs," and then discusses the way that he now understands them to be "a testimony against slavery" and "a prayer to God for deliverance" (Douglass 14). Douglass analyzes the lasting effects of his memories of these slave songs, stating "to those songs I trace my first glimmering conception of the dehumanizing character of slavery" (Douglass 14). This reflection on the past events shows the power and control that Douglass commands over his own narration and consciousness. His memory of these songs creates an embedded hatred toward the institution of slavery that remains and fuels his abolitionist arguments, as he states, "those songs still follow me, to deepen my hatred of slavery, and quicken my sympathies for my brethren in bonds" (Douglass 14). Through the duality of his narration in these examples, Douglass displays the important insight that his present self can offer in explanation of his past self's experiences.

In addition to including extra-diegetic, abolitionist commentary on his past experiences, Douglass also includes moments in his narrative where he calls the reader's attention to himself as the writer of the very narrative that we are reading. In the same discussion of the slave songs that he heard as a young person, the present Douglass states, "I have frequently found myself in tears while hearing them…and while I am writing these lines, an expression of feeling has already found its way down my cheek" (Douglass 14). With this statement, the reader can

visualize Douglass physically writing his narrative and shedding tears, which shifts the setting of the text from the past, diegetic story to the present, extra-diegetic moment in which Douglass is living. Douglass uses this strategy again when he later states, "My feet have been so cracked with the frost, that the pen with which I am writing might be laid in the gashes" (Douglass 27). In both of these instances, Douglass highlights the physical act of writing and creates an image of the lasting effects of his experience in slavery, through both the tears that his memories still evoke and the physical scars that are left from the terrible conditions he endured. In these instances, Douglass seems to come perilously close to the situation of Brinch, as he shows how his body and his identity are forever marked by his experiences under slavery. However, where Brinch uses the lasting mark of slavery to show his pervasive lack of autonomy, Douglass uses it instead as an occasion to prove that even as he is forever scarred by his enslavement, he can retake his agency to narrate both the trauma of slavery and his recollection of it. Douglass traces the scars on his feet to draw attention to the lasting mark of slavery, but in using the pen he takes ownership over it and points to his ability to write his own story. The explicit emphasis on the pen prompts the reader to attend to the fact that Douglass using writing and self-narration to reclaim agency in a way that Brinch cannot.

Though Douglass typically makes narrative choices to establish his authorial power, in an exceptional moment of intertextuality that resembles those in Brinch's narrative, Douglass includes a poem by American abolitionist poet John Greenleaf Whittier, who he refers to as "the slave's poet" (Douglass 48). In chapter eight, Douglass explains "the base ingratitude" with which the slaveholders treated his "poor old grandmother," and the way that their actions "served to deepen [his] conviction of the infernal character of slavery" (Douglass 47). He explains how his grandmother "served [his] old master from youth to old age," raising him from infancy and

being the source of his wealth by "people[ing] his plantation with slaves;" however, despite her extensive work, she was "left a slave – a slave for life" and turned "out to die" in a hut in the woods by herself (Douglass 48). Having not seen her in years, Douglass wonders whether she still lives and imagines that if she does, she "lives to suffer in utter loneliness…to remember and mourn over the loss of children, the loss of grandchildren, and the loss of great grandchildren" (Douglass 48). While imagining her experience of isolation, he introduces the Whittier poem that begins with the lines "Gone, gone, sold and gone" and laments the "stolen daughters" of the poet's speaker (Douglass 48). Douglass's use of intertextuality in this moment suggests the significance of his distress and his inability to give proper expression to the experience he imagines his grandmother suffering. Much like Brinch, it seems that Douglass is, in this moment, turning to intertextuality to offer another voice to narrate an experience that he himself cannot narrate sufficiently. Douglass turns to Whittier to give expression to the experience of someone who will never be free—even if it is his grandmother – because he himself wants to maintain the freedom that he has achieved through literacy and escape. Because he has worked diligently to be able to articulate his life as one of self-autonomy, it would undermine his freedom or signify regression to use his own voice to narrate the imagined experience of a "slave for life" (Douglass 47).

The distinction between diegesis and extra-diegesis throughout Douglass's narrative, as signaled by explicit markers of time like "when a slave" or "since I came to the north," portray a duality in Douglass that creates a distinction between who he was as a slave and who he is as a free man. This distinction is addressed by Douglass himself in his 1846 response to a claim in *The Liberator* that he had not actually authored his narrative. In late 1845, the same year Douglass's narrative was published, a man named A.C.C. Thompson wrote an article claiming

that he knew Douglass when he was enslaved in the South and that "the Narrative was not written by the professed author" but instead by "some evil designed person or persons" who had taken statements from him and written the narrative "to excite the indignation of the public opinion against the slaveholders of the South" (Thompson). In support of his argument, Thompson claims "I knew this recreant slave by the name of Frederick Bailey, (instead of Douglass)" and that Frederick Bailey was "an unlearned, and rather an ordinary negro," incapable "of writing the Narrative alluded to; for none but an educated man…could write so correctly" (Thompson). In a letter directly addressing Thompson, Douglass simply states, "Yes, that was my name," and then goes on to explain how his "change of circumstances has made a surprising change in [him]," alluding to his acquisition of literacy and freedom through escape to the North ("Letter to William Lloyd Garrison"). In clear language, Douglass addresses the duality of his character, stating "Frederick Douglass, the freeman, is a very different person from Frederick Bailey, (my former name), the slave" ("Letter to William Lloyd Garrison").

The difference between Frederick Bailey and Frederick Douglass, as expressed as the difference between the slave and the freeman, is seen in the duality of Douglass's text and the use of both diegesis and extra-diegesis. Just as the narrative has two voices, so too does Douglass have two distinct lives: his past life as a slave and his present life as a free man. As Douglass explains in his narrative, "the name given to [him] by [his] mother was Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey" and he was "generally known by the name of Frederick Bailey" before escaping north, where he first took the name "Frederick Johnson" and then allowed a friend to choose the name "Frederick Douglass" for him based on a poem by Sir Walter Scott (Douglass 111-112). The duality of Douglass's narration and the transformation that it represents is something that Brinch never experiences. Where Douglass changed his name in freedom, Brinch

changed his name in enslavement, losing his given name and being dubbed Jeffrey by Captain Mills, whose ship he served on. Thus, Douglass's name change signifies his freedom, while Brinch's name change signifies his enslavement and lasts beyond emancipation. The importance of Douglass's free name is amplified in its prominent position in the title of the text, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*¸ whereas Brinch is relegated to "the blind African slave" in the title of his text, further emphasizing the lasting mark of slavery on his autonomy and selfhood.

Brinch and Douglass's respective texts establish different conceptions of the narrators' freedom and the autonomy available to previously enslaved people in America. While Brinch's text works to show that even after emancipation he lacks the autonomy to narrate his own life story, Douglass's text works to establish his autonomy and authorial power and solidify his transition from the slave Frederick Bailey to the free man Frederick Douglass. The comparison of these texts illustrates how narrative structures and forms can reveal the power and autonomy of their narrators, as well as what the narrators want to say about their own autonomy. Douglass's use of diegesis and extra-diegesis with limited intertextuality establishes his authorial power and emphasizes his transition from enslavement to freedom, whereas Brinch's turn to intertextuality to narrate the moments of capture and commodification reinforces his inability to self-narrate. While the two formerly enslaved narrators make different arguments about the lasting effects of slavery and the access to freedom that they're afforded, it is clear that the way each narrator presents their story is as telling as the contents of the stories themselves.

One of the primary reasons I chose to examine Boyrereau Brinch's narrative was the general unpopularity of the text, both at the time of its publication and today. After reading a variety of transatlantic slave narratives, including those of Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, Quobna Ottobah Cugoano, and Olaudah Equiano, it became clear that, despite conventions of the genre,

there is no inevitable way to present a slave narrative. Thus, I was prompted to examine how the narrative structure of Brinch's text contributes to it being forgotten by scholarship and history. While Kari Winters offers many viable reasons for why *The Blind African Slave* has not been more widely read, including its supposed "inauthenticity" and ineffectiveness as abolitionist propaganda given its depiction of Northern rather than Southern slavery, these explanations do not account for how the narrative structure and resulting argument about slavery deter modern readers and keep the text outside of the canon of popular slave narratives.

In comparing Brinch's text to one of the most well-known and read American slave narratives, Douglass's 1845 *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, I have revealed how the narrative structure of each text illustrates two very different arguments about the lasting effects of slavery, which likely contributes to either attracting or deterring audiences. Douglass's text has become widely popular because his particular way of narrating is compelling for audiences, as it shows the authorial power and autonomy that he has been able to achieve after escaping slavery. This thus relays the idea that slavery is surmountable through literacy and escape, and that the state of enslavement is therefore only temporary. However, Brinch's text reveals an argument that directly refutes this idea by illustrating the lasting subjugation of a formerly enslaved person and its pervasive effects on even his children.

In examining Brinch's text, I set out to showcase another way of discussing the lasting legacy of slavery in the United States by looking particularly at the way his narrative proves that he is forever unfree. While Douglass's text offers the reassuring idea that slavery can be overcome and that its scars can be erased with literacy and physical freedom, Brinch's narrative offers an argument that many would prefer to ignore, namely that the detrimental effects of slavery persist not only in the formerly enslaved person's emancipation, but also in the lives of

the generations of black Americans that follow. Thus, the unpopularity of Brinch's text stems not only from its lack of political appeal or want for "authenticity," but also from its refusal to adhere to what we believe a slave narrative "should" achieve, which is to prove the autonomy of its narrator and show the correction of slavery through emancipation. Instead, Brinch's text gives us a new way to discuss the legacy of slavery by confronting us with the realistic, albeit disturbing, image of how the lasting effects of a long-abolished racist and oppressive institution can persist and mark generations of Americans with the scars of subjugation.

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